Purple's decision to split-official

GLENN HUGHES

AFTER MONTHS of speculation about their future, Deep Purple officially announced this week that they have broken up. Rumours of a possible split have been widespread for some time, until recently, have always been met by denials. But now an official statement, issued on behalf of the band, says that they "will not record or perform together as Deep Purple again."

The final decision was taken last week by the current members — Jon Lord (keyboards), Ian Paice (drums), David Coverdale (vocals), Glenn Hughes (bass) and Tommy Bolin (guitar) — together with their manager, Rob Cooksey. And it is described as the culmination of a series of personnel changes over the last few years, the last being the departure of Ritchie Blackmore just over a year ago.

Indeed, Purple's 8½-year span has been a history of personnel upheavals. When they were formed in February, 1968, the original line-up comprised Lord, Paice, Blackmore, bassist Nick Simper and singer Rod Evans. The latter two left later the same year, to be replaced by Roger Glover and Ian Gillan. These two newcomers lasted for bestpart of four years when, after a period of friction within the band, both left — Gillan giving his reason as "lack of progression in the group."

Their places were taken by Trapeze bassist Hughes and relatively unknown singer David Coverdale. The crunch came last year when Blackmore left to form his own outfit Rainbow and, although he was replaced by Tommy Bolin, the writing was already on the wall for Purple.

Yet despite these many upsets, Purple maintained a huge following both in Britain and abroad. Every one of their 11 albums achieved gold awards, and two of them — "Made In Japan" and "Machine Head" — received platinum discs. Their concerts were guaranteed sell-outs, and they had the added distinction of being named "the world's loudest band" by the Guinness Book of Records.

So what happens now? NME understands that Jon Lord and Ian Paice are in the process of forming a new band together, and that the line-up will include at least one other big-name musician, whose identity cannot be revealed at this stage for contractual reasons. Lord has just completed work on a semi-classical solo album titled "Saraband," which will be released in the autumn.

Glenn Hughes has been working on a solo LP for some time, and this is now almost finished. Three weeks ago, NME reported the news that Trapeze are re-forming with their original line-up of Hughes, Mel Galley and Dave Holland, for what was intended to be a one-off tour of America (August) and Britain (September). But now that Purple's split is official, the Trapeze reunion could assume a more permanent basis.

Coverdale starts work on a solo album next month, and it is expected that he will pursue a solo career. The future of Tommy Bolin is uncertain, as his affairs are not handled by Cooksey and he has his own U.S. manager — but it seems likely that he will devote much of his time to working in the States as a soloist.

Also uncertain is the future of Purple Records, the label in which the members of the group have a financial interest and which — following the launching of the subsidiary Oyster label — was reserved solely for the output of Purple material. Cooksey told NME: "Oyster will definitely continue, because the boys don't have a stake in that label. But at this moment, we don't know what we shall do with Purple Records."

The official statement says that Cooksey "expects to have collated all the relevant information" about the future plans of the five Purple members by next week.

JON LORD